

Plan International Rwanda

Partnerships for change

newsletter

"Together for brighter futures for children, girls, and youth"



January – March 2025

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Message from the Country Director



Dear partners,

On behalf of Plan International Rwanda, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your ongoing collaboration. Your partnership makes our work both possible and meaningful. I truly believe in equal partnership and support the implementation of our newly approved partnership strategy.

As I began my role in 2025, I had the privilege of visiting various government institutions and meeting local partners. These engagements reaffirmed the strength of our shared mission to advance children's rights and gender equality.

This quarter also marked the beginning of the process to elaborate our new Country Strategy 2026–2030. Together with young people and partners, we reviewed the achievements of the past five years and defined bold, inclusive priorities that reflect the voices of those we serve.

I invite you to explore the highlights in this edition of Partnerships for Change, showcasing the progress we're making together.

Best regards,

Emilie Fernandes
Country Director,
Plan International Rwanda



Welcoming Plan International Rwanda's new Country Director

Plan International Rwanda's staff welcome the new Country Director

Plan International Rwanda staff welcomed Emilie Fernandes as the new Country Director, stepping in for Solomon Tesfa-Mariam as the Interim Country Director. Emilie brings deep expertise in international development and a strong commitment to promoting gender equality and children's rights in Rwanda.



Meeting with local partners



Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes met with local partners in her first official engagement to discuss ongoing programmes and deepen collaboration. The session reaffirmed a shared commitment to empowering children, girls, and youth nationwide.

Courtesy visits to the government institutions

National Child Development Agency (NCDA):

Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes, met with the Director General Assumpta Ingabire. Their discussion focused on celebrating the good partnership between the two organizations in Child Protection (CP) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme to create a safer and more nurturing environment for children in Rwanda.



Gender Monitoring Office (GMO):



Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes, was received by the Chief Gender Monitor, Umutoni Nadine, for an introductory courtesy visit. They reaffirmed the strong partnership between the two organizations and explored opportunities for joint programming to advance gender equality, enhance accountability, and strengthen efforts in the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC):

Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes, paid a courtesy visit to the Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), Prof. Claude Mambo Muvunyi. Discussions centered on the bilateral agreement to promote joint actions under the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) programme.



Field visits to Programme Units (PUs)

Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes, visited local partners in the Bugesera and Nyaruguru Programme Units (PUs) to witness firsthand the impact of various programmes on local communities.

During her visit, the Country Director met with the Mayors of Bugesera and Nyaruguru Districts, Richard Mutabazi and Emmanuel Murwanashyaka, to strengthen partnerships and reaffirm Plan International's commitment to supporting the government's initiatives for the empowerment of children, girls, and young people.

Among the visited partners were the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Save Generations Organization (SGO), African Enterprise (AEE) Rwanda, Inkomoko, Imbaraga, Dream Village Organisation, Caritas, Youth Mentoring Agents for Development Organization (YOMADO), and the World Food Programme (WFP). She explored various initiatives, including the Strengthening Child Protection and SRHR project, the youth agripreneurship programme, and the innovative greenhouse initiative for climate-smart farming and mushroom growing.

The Country Director also interacted with community volunteers assisting sponsored families, parents participating in Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes, and young people at the Nook Hub acquiring vocational skills. She observed Child Protection Clubs that empower children to advocate for their rights.



International Women's Day 2025

A special message from the Country Director to girls and women

To mark International Women's Day, Plan International Rwanda's Country Director, Emilie Fernandes, delivered a powerful message celebrating the strength, achievements, and resilience of girls and women across Rwanda.

This year, the national theme was: **"Empower Her: Shape the Future Generation."**

Marking International Women's Day

A message from our Country Director,
Emilie Fernandes, Plan International Rwanda

#IWD2025



 Listen to the message

"At Plan International Rwanda, together with our partners, we believe that when girls and young women are supported, educated, and given equal opportunities, they become the driving force behind a more just and prosperous society." - Emilie Fernandes, Country Director.



Youth corner

Young women leaders reflect on their ‘#LeadHer Fellowship’ journeys

Three young women leaders from Rwanda, namely Sabrina, Naila, and Solange, participated in the 4th cohort of the #LeadHer Fellowship, held in Tanzania from 17 to 21 March 2025. All three are actively involved in Plan International Rwanda’s girls’ leadership initiatives and are members of the newly established youth-led partner organisation, Youth Voice in Leadership, Equality and Development (YVLEAD).

The #LeadHer Fellowship, organised by Plan International - MEESA (Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa) in partnership with the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy, aims to strengthen the leadership capacities of young African women.



“For young women, the Lead(H)er Fellowship is more than just a programme. It’s a movement that symbolises empowerment and breaking down barriers to gender equality. It offers a platform for young women across Africa to connect, learn, and rise together. It means being seen, being heard, and being prepared to lead. Through its practical sessions and cross-cultural exchanges, the platform enhanced my ability to think critically, act purposefully, and advocate for the inclusion of young women in leadership spaces.”

– Sabrina

Youth Insights on engagement with Plan International Rwanda’s next Country Strategy

Youth played a pivotal role in developing Plan International Rwanda’s upcoming Country Strategy (CS) 2026–2030 during a four-day hybrid Strategic Choices and Design Workshop, which also involved Plan International MEESA (Middle East, Eastern and Southern Africa) and the Plan International Global Hub.

Youth representatives shared their aspirations and recommendations to help guide the organisation’s future direction. Notable contributors included Yvonne Musabyimana, Founder and Executive Director of Strive for Inclusion (SFI); Ineza Umuhoza Grace, Co-founder of The Green Protector (TGP); and Anastase Ndagijimana, Chairperson of the Youth and Women Empowered Network (YWEN) and Rwanda’s representative on the MEESA Youth Advisory Panel.





“Participating in the strategic planning process of an international organisation is the first step in ensuring active engagement of local actors, particularly young people and experts, in implementing long-lasting impact in Rwanda. Rwanda is one of the leading countries in Africa where youth inclusion in decision-making is not tokenistic but a genuine opportunity for young people to be active stakeholders in concrete actions on the ground. Plan International Rwanda is taking the right steps, but there is still room for improvement in fully recognising the active role of youth as stakeholders.”

- Ineza Umuhoza Grace, Founder and CEO of The Green Protector.

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“Being part of the Country Strategy development has been a personal milestone and a strong affirmation that young people are not merely beneficiaries of development programmes. We are key partners and changemakers shaping the future we want. This experience reaffirmed my belief that when young people are genuinely engaged in strategic planning, we contribute fresh perspectives, lived experiences, and innovative solutions that address the real needs of our peers and communities.” - Anastase Ndagijimana, Rwanda’s representative on the MEESA Youth Advisory Panel.



The workshop focused on reflecting on achievements, challenges, and key lessons from the 2020–2025 strategy; analysing emerging trends, the funding landscape, and contextual shifts impacting programming and partnerships; defining strategic priorities, programmatic and influencing objectives; identifying cross-cutting themes, operational enablers, and risk mitigation strategies; and developing approaches for partnerships, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Research (MELR), and resource mobilisation.



Aspirations of young women in the new 'Empower Her Internship' Programme

Plan International Rwanda officially welcomed the first cohort of girls and young women into its year-long Empower Her internship programme. This initiative is designed to provide hands-on experience and practical skills, giving young women participants a strong foundation for their career development. It aims to offer more opportunities for young and talented women to access decent jobs. By working closely with partner organisations, the interns will gain valuable exposure to professional environments and strengthen their future employment prospects.



Girls and young women join Plan International Rwanda's new #EmpowerHer programme.



Goal?

Equipping girls and young women in Rwanda with practical experience and boosting their career development.

#EmpowerHer



"The 'Empower Her' internship programme is incredibly empowering for youth, particularly girls and young women. I aspire to gain valuable hands-on experience that will enhance my career development, while improving the skills and confidence necessary for success in my future career. I also welcome the programme as a platform to strengthen my leadership abilities, enabling me to contribute to creating a positive impact in the community." - Violet Kamaliza, Intern in Skills and Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (SOYEE) and Disaster Risk Management and Resilience (DRMR) programmes.



Yasin and Valens: Defying gender norms through vocational skills

In many communities, gender norms still dictate the types of work considered appropriate for men and women. However, 22-year-old Yasin, a young woman learning welding, and 20-year-old Valens, a young man learning women's hairdressing, are showing that young people can challenge these stereotypes and forge their own paths towards a brighter future.

"I chose welding because it's my passion. Despite being told that I couldn't succeed as a girl, I believe that what men can do, women can do too."

- Yasin.



Now employed at a local welding business, Yasin is honing her craft and dreams of launching her own enterprise.

Valens, the only male women's hairdresser in his area, faced ridicule from his peers but remained determined.



"I was eager to learn new skills. I started as a barber and have since expanded into women's hairstyling and nail painting, fields many in my community see as exclusively female. I want to challenge that mindset and train other young people in my community."

- Valens.

For the past four months, Yasin and Valens have been part of the Skills & Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (SOYEE) Hub, a programme run by Dream Village Organisation in partnership with Plan International Rwanda.

Partners' strategic workshop on the new partnership strategy



Plan International Rwanda and its partners held a two-day strategic workshop to discuss the new partnership strategy and share perspectives on the 2026–2030 Country Strategy (CS). The session provided a critical opportunity to reflect on the past five years of operations and programme delivery.

Participants reviewed performance, assessed internal capacities and external trends, identified gaps and opportunities, and explored thematic priorities. Cross-cutting issues were incorporated into the discussions, and clear action points were agreed to guide the next stage of strategic design.

Partners' Safeguarding, Advocacy and Communications' learning session

Plan International Rwanda held a technical learning session on Safeguarding in Programmes, Communications, and Advocacy in Kigali. The session aimed to enhance partners' understanding of safeguarding policies, focusing on their effective implementation to ensure the safety and well-being of programme participants.



Participants also developed skills in strategic communications, content creation, and digital platforms, enabling them to improve the visibility and documentation of joint projects, as well as media outreach and advocacy efforts.

Engaged partners included Youth Mentoring Agents for Development Organization (YOMADO), Caritas Rwanda, Dream Village Organisation, Imbaraga, Bamporeze, Dufatanye, the Association des Guides du Rwanda (AGR), Rural Development Initiative (RDI), Save Generations Organization (SGO) and Family Care for Children (FCC).

Families enhance children's nutrition to improve growth and education

Alice began attending sessions at her local home-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, implemented by Plan International Rwanda and Caritas Rwanda, where she gained essential knowledge and skills that helped parents like her transform their approach to nutrition and childcare.





“Lack of knowledge on how to prepare a balanced diet affects families, particularly children’s growth. My family experienced this, and it impacted my children’s wellbeing. At the centre, my peers and I learnt how to prepare balanced meals using three types of food: energy-giving, body-building, and body-protecting. Now, we cook nutritious meals at home, and I am working to overcome malnutrition.”

– Alice.

Antoine, a father of eight, also faced challenges in providing for his family. As he explains, food insecurity had a direct impact on his children’s education.

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“Not having enough food at home negatively affected my children’s academic performance. They would either miss school or struggle to concentrate in class, which ultimately led to poor results.”

– Antoine.



Through the home and school-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Bugesera, Gatsibo, and Nyaruguru districts, 96 home-based ECD centres are supporting 2,406 children, including 1,224 boys and 1,182 girls, while 10 school-based centres are supporting 678 children, including 317 boys and 361 girls. Each centre is complemented by a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), which provides financial support to families.



Donating essential supplies to support child well-being

Caritas Rwanda, in partnership with Plan International Rwanda, donated essential supplies aimed at improving child well-being in Gatsibo District to 16 Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. The donation included 1,460 kg of porridge flour, 460 kg of sugar, 80 bars of soap, 320 basins, 16 mats, and additional hygiene essentials. These provisions will help the centres better support children's health and nutrition.



Learning journeys to promote youth access to SRHR services



The Association des Guides du Rwanda (AGR) organised learning journeys in Nyaruguru and Gatsibo districts as part of ongoing efforts to enhance adolescents' and young people's knowledge of, and access to, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services.

These journeys were designed to provide young people, particularly adolescent girls, with the opportunity to engage directly with local health service providers in a supportive and educational setting. Participants visited health centres, youth corners, and Isange One Stop Centre (OSC), where they took part in interactive sessions with healthcare professionals and counsellors.

These engagements enabled the youth to ask questions, raise concerns, and access accurate information on a range of SRHR topics, including family planning, menstrual hygiene, HIV prevention, and gender-based violence response services.

Training girls and peer educators in sustainable menstrual hygiene management

The Association des Guides du Rwanda (AGR), in partnership with Plan International Rwanda, trained 360 girls and 12 peer educators from Nyaruguru and Gatsibo districts in making reusable sanitary pads. This initiative not only equipped participants with practical skills but also promoted sustainable menstrual hygiene solutions within their communities.

During the training, one participant shared the programme's impact: "This training has taught us how to make our own sanitary pads, which is very helpful as many girls cannot afford them. Now, we can support ourselves and even help our friends."

Her testimony highlights the project's positive impact and how it directly addresses the menstrual hygiene challenges faced by young girls.



Advocating for affordable menstrual hygiene products for rural adolescents and young women



Save Generations Organisation (SGO) held a validation meeting with 30 members of the Sexual, Reproductive, Health and Rights (SRHR) network and key stakeholders to review findings from a study conducted across 15 districts to assess the affordability and accessibility of menstrual hygiene products for adolescents and young women in rural areas.

Discussions during the meeting highlighted key challenges, including economic barriers, supply chain constraints, and the persistent stigma surrounding menstrual health. The insights gathered will inform future advocacy efforts aimed at ensuring that menstrual hygiene products are both affordable and accessible for all adolescent girls and young women in Rwanda.

The study involved an in-depth assessment featuring representatives from the Private Sector Federation, teachers responsible for girls' rooms, nurses overseeing adolescent and SRHR activities, and 47 focus groups composed of young people and mothers who shared their perspectives on menstrual health challenges and potential solutions.

Training peer educators and teachers on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

Save Generations Organisation (SGO) held a quarterly follow-up meeting with trained peer educators and teachers to strengthen their capacity to deliver Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education.

The session brought together 44 participants, including 18 women and 26 men, and focused on refreshing their knowledge, providing ongoing support, and reviewing previous activities to improve programme delivery in schools and communities.

It also provided a space for participants to openly discuss challenges, share successes, and exchange best practices in SRHR implementation.



Raising awareness on children's rights with disabilities



Rwandan Organisation of Women with Disabilities (UNABU), in partnership with Plan International Rwanda, conducted an awareness campaign on the rights of children with disabilities. The initiative reached five schools, engaging 7,188 students, including 3,791 girls, to promote a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

District-level child rights forum

Youth Mentoring Agents for Development Organisation (YOMADO), in partnership with Plan International Rwanda, held a district-level child rights forum. The event brought together government policymakers and local authorities to raise awareness about the need for budgeted legal frameworks, policies, and programmes focused on child protection.

A standout moment was the children's poetry segment—an emotional and powerful platform where children expressed their perspectives and rights in their own voices. Their words added depth and urgency to the forum's message.



Child protection training for local leaders

Bamporeze, in collaboration with Plan International Rwanda and the National Child Development Agency (NCDA), organised capacity-building training for 80 leaders to strengthen understanding of child rights and the Integrated Child Rights Policy.

The training, held in Nyaruguru District, included leaders from village to district levels, officials from the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) and Isange One Stop Centre, health sector partners, and members of key community-based groups such as Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZUs), children's committees, child protection structures, women's councils, and representatives of people with disabilities.

The sessions reinforced the importance of positive parenting and encouraged stronger participation in child protection activities. They also fostered greater accountability and collaboration across all leadership levels to tackle child protection challenges in the district.



Promoting child protection through sports

Family Care for Children (FCC), in partnership with Plan International Rwanda, successfully brought together 15 partner schools for an interschool football and talent competition under the project "Promoting Child Protection in the Community through Family and Child Participation for Positive Change." During the event, Child Protection Club members actively shared key messages and slogans promoting children's rights, fostering a culture of care, and encouraging parental support for children's well-being.

By integrating advocacy into engaging activities, the competition enhanced community awareness and participation in child protection. It demonstrated that sports and talent can be powerful tools for social change, helping ensure children grow up in safe, supportive environments where they can thrive.



We send a big thank you to all our partners!



About Plan International Rwanda

We are an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights & equality for girls. We've been operating in Rwanda since 2007.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face.

We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity.

We are present at national and local levels with a focus on the districts of Bugesera, Gatsibo and Nyaruguru. We also work in 6 refugee camps across the country.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

Contact editorial team

Remy Niyigize,
Influencing and Communications Manager
Email: Remy.Niyigize@plan-international.org

Marie Solange Iradukunda,
Communications and Graphics Coordinator
Email: MarieSolange.Iradukunda@plan-international.org